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EPA testing Riverside homes for chemical vapors

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By Breaking News Staff

RIVERSIDE — Dangerous vapors may be seeping into homes in the Riverside community and residents expressed fear and confusion Tuesday night as they learned more from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The area in question lies within Rohrer Boulevard and Minnesota Drive and Hypathia Avenue to Valley Pike. The EPA has set up a temporary office on Harshman Drive.

The EPA is assuring residents the drinking water and food grown in gardens are OK and that people are not likely to get sick, but at the same time they're advising people to get their homes tested for elevated levels of trichloroethylene and tetrachloroethylene, chemicals used for removing grease from metal.

The EPA tested the area last summer and found unsafe levels of TCE and PCE, which can cause headaches, lung irritation, affect mental health and in some cases cause death.

"We have a ground water problem here, in which vapors are moving into the basements of homes," according to Steve Renninger of the US EPA.

The EPA learned the Mullins Rubber Products plant on Pleasant Valley Avenue uses one of the chemicals but not the other.

Renninger said it's not clear what the source is of the contamination.

"The spill did not happen yesterday. I don't know how long its been contaminated though," he said.

Residents who attended the meeting Tuesday night filled out forms to have their homes checked by the EPA.

Contaminated homes will need to be ventilated at a cost of thousands of dollars, which is being paid for by the EPA.

Lori Jackson, who recently learned she and her four daughters have been living near contaminated ground for the last decade, said she's worried.

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"I'm nervous. I don't know what chemicals. I don't know if there would be an effect (of) longevity," Jackson said. "My children are my No. 1 priority. I mean I don't want nothing to happen to them."

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